

***INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE***  
***May 31 - June 7, 2012***

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**1. [Panetta Arrives in Afghanistan to Assess Situation](#) (06-07-2012)**

By Jim Garamone  
American Forces Press Service

KABUL, Afghanistan, June 7, 2012 – Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta arrived here today to meet with NATO and Afghan leaders, visit with American troops, and assess the situation on the ground.

This is Panetta's fourth trip to Afghanistan as defense secretary. He will meet with International Security Assistance Force commander Marine Corps Gen. John R. Allen, U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Ryan C. Crocker and Afghan Defense Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak.

Panetta told reporters traveling with him that he will receive an update on the situation in Afghanistan and on the plans Allen has put in place for the final drawdown of surge forces. The roundtable was held in India yesterday, but embargoed until the secretary arrived in here for his unannounced visit.

The secretary will also receive briefings on the training, equipping and combat effectiveness of Afghan national security forces.

The secretary wants to pay tribute to Crocker, who is leaving his post shortly.

"He's been around a long time in some very tough positions," Panetta said of the ambassador. "Working with General Allen, he was able to complete the work on the memorandums of understanding and Strategic Partnership Agreement with the Afghans."

The secretary said he wants to get a sense of what's happening on the ground. The Taliban have launched some attacks lately that are more organized than in the past, Panetta said. While the levels of violence are down, it is a concern for him. "I think it's important to make sure that we are aware of the kind of attacks they are going to engage in, particularly as we go through the rest of the summer," he said.

The secretary said the situation in Pakistan also concerns him, but he said the United States will keep working with Afghanistan's neighbor to reopen the supply lines through Pakistan and to get Pakistani security forces to stop the cross-border attacks by the Taliban and other terror groups like the Haqqani network.

The United States and India must continue to work with Pakistan, Panetta said.

"Having a stable Pakistan is extremely important," he said.

The safe havens in the federally administered tribal areas in Pakistan continue to be a concern, Panetta said. Terrorists can use this area to plan attacks and then cross the border into Afghanistan and launch them. It's in Pakistan's interest as well to take on these groups, the secretary said. Terrorists have killed thousands of Pakistanis and that country's military has been able to combat the terror groups in the past. The Pakistani military went into Waziristan to fight extremists there, for example.

"The bottom line with Pakistan: it is a complicated relationship, but it is a necessary relationship," Panetta said.

The United States must keep working with Pakistan, Panetta said, in order "to get their cooperation in that effort" to combat Pakistan-based terrorists.

Pakistan is important to the stability of the region, Panetta said. "For that reason, both India, the United States and others are going to have to do everything we can to try to do what is possible to improve the relationship," he said.

Biographies:

[Leon E. Panetta](#)

[Ryan C. Crocker](#)

[Marine Corps Gen. John R. Allen](#)

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[Photo Essay: Panetta Visits Kabul, Afghanistan to Meet With NATO, Afghan Leaders](#)

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## **2. U.S.-Azerbaijan Ties Benefit Region, Global Community (06-06-2012)**

By MacKenzie C. Babb  
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov for talks highlighting what Clinton called a "constructive, comprehensive" U.S.-Azerbaijan relationship that has benefited the people of both countries for more than two decades.

"One only has to open one's eyes to see the progress that has occurred," Clinton said June 6 in Baku, Azerbaijan's capital. "But we need to go further."

During a joint news conference, Clinton and Mammadyarov highlighted the 20th anniversary of U.S.-Azerbaijan relations.

“Through these years, we managed to establish a strong partnership and strategic cooperation in various fields,” including humanitarian and military efforts, counterterrorism and combating drug trafficking, Mammadyarov said.

Clinton said both the United States and Azerbaijan are committed to continuing to strengthen bilateral bonds with a focus on three key areas: security, energy and democratic reforms.

On security, the secretary expressed appreciation for Azerbaijan’s past contributions in Iraq and Kosovo and its “vital ongoing work in Afghanistan” to support the transport of troops and nonlethal supplies to the international mission.

She said the leaders also discussed the recent violence along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

“This cycle of violence and retaliation must end, and everyone should work to keep the peace,” the secretary said, echoing the message she delivered earlier in the week during a visit to Armenia. She said the United States is prepared to do whatever possible to help both sides reach a settlement.

Clinton said the United States and Azerbaijan are also committed to continuing their close work on energy security.

“It is a common strategic interest for both countries and one of the great global challenges of our time,” she said. The secretary expressed her “great appreciation for the central role that Azerbaijan plays in efforts to diversify supplies of oil and gas as well as the routes over which they are transported.”

She added that the United States supports Azerbaijan’s goal of establishing a southern corridor for natural gas exports to Europe, calling it a “crucial link that will solidify Azerbaijan’s ties to the Euro-Atlantic community.”

Finally, Clinton said the leaders discussed the importance of fostering a vibrant civil society and furthering democratic reforms in Azerbaijan. She said doing so will add greatly to the country’s long-term success and economic prosperity.

“We believe that countries that flourish in the 21st century will be those that respect the rule of law, freedom of the press, freedom of expression and other universal rights,” she said. “I have great confidence that Azerbaijan can both continue the path of economic prosperity and continue on a path toward political reform.”

Clinton’s stop in Azerbaijan came as part of a seven-nation tour May 31–June 7. The secretary so far has visited Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Armenia and Georgia and is scheduled to travel to Turkey before returning to Washington.

[Clinton, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Mammadyarov in Baku](#)  
[Clinton’s Interview with Georgian Public Broadcaster](#)

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### **3. U.S. Envoy Wood on Implementation of NPT on Iran (06-05-2012)**

United States Mission to International Organization in Vienna  
IAEA Board of Governors Meeting  
June 4-8, 2012

Agenda Item 7(d)

Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Provisions  
of United Nations Security Council Resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Mr. Chairman,

The United States would like to extend its deep appreciation to the Director General and his staff for this latest report on the implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and relevant provisions of the Security Council resolutions on Iran.

We commend the Director General and his staff for their highly professional efforts in carrying out the Agency's verification mandates in Iran. Despite those efforts, and despite recent Iranian claims of willingness to cooperate, the Director General's report confirms that the facts on the ground in Iran continue to be cause for deep concern on two fronts. First, Iran continues to carry out and expand proliferation sensitive activities the Security Council has decided must be suspended. Second, Iran has yet to follow through on its reported "agreement to agree" with the IAEA's structured approach for resolving the IAEA's concerns about the possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear program. Far from answering these questions, Iran continues to hold the IAEA in abeyance while pondering the order in which they will be answered.

The Director General's resulting conclusions are clear: the Agency is still unable to provide credible assurance about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran, and therefore cannot conclude that all nuclear material in Iran is in peaceful activities.

Of particular concern, the Director General's latest report confirms that, rather than take concrete steps to come into compliance with its obligations, Iran continues to expand its enrichment program in defiance of multiple legally binding Security Council and Board of Governors resolutions requiring Iran to suspend all enrichment activities. Iran continues to install centrifuges at Natanz and the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant near Qom, and continues to enrich uranium to near 20 percent. Iran has actually accelerated its production of low-enriched uranium, even though it has now produced a total of more than 6,000 kilograms of UF<sub>6</sub> enriched up to five percent, and nearly 150 kilograms of UF<sub>6</sub> enriched up to 20 percent. There appears no immediate peaceful need for such stockpiles or for such an acceleration of the program, and we would note that this quantity of low-enriched uranium is enough for several nuclear weapons if further enriched to higher levels.

Our concerns regarding the Fordow facility are amplified given the previously clandestine nature of the facility, Iran's multiple revisions to the facility's declared purpose, and the fact that Iran is still stonewalling the IAEA's requests for additional information regarding the facility's original and current purpose. These immediate concerns are exacerbated by Iran's recent installation of two new cascades, above and beyond the four cascades already operating, and thus bringing the total number of centrifuges installed at Fordow to over 1000 in total.

Iran has yet to provide any evidence to demonstrate that the construction of Fordow was for a legitimate and peaceful civilian purpose, constructed as it was in secret and at a size inconsistent with any plausible civil need. It is for this reason that the continued expansion of this facility

remains a serious provocation and why we call for its immediate shutdown if we are to reduce the confidence deficit between Iran and the international community.

In addition to our concerns with the Fordow facility, the Director General reports on other areas that require Iran's immediate attention and clarification. For example, we note that the Agency has previously requested additional information in relation to a discrepancy of 19.8 kilograms of natural uranium metal in Iran; we are disappointed that Iran has not provided this information, particularly in light of our concerns regarding the possible military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program. We call on Iran to fully cooperate with the Agency in resolving this discrepancy. We also note the Director General's report that Iran's refusal thus far to provide the IAEA with updated design information for the IR-40 heavy water reactor is now having an adverse impact on the Agency's ability to effectively verify the design of the facility. Iran is required to provide this information under the modified Code 3.1 of the Subsidiary Arrangements under Iran's safeguards agreement that the IAEA and this Board has made clear is still in force in Iran.

Mr. Chairman,

Turning to the issue of outstanding issues related to the possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear program, the Director General's report makes clear that Iran continues to deny the Agency the full cooperation necessary, including access to the locations, documents, and personnel required to resolve these outstanding issues. The Director General's report is yet another reminder that despite the best efforts of the IAEA, Iran has failed to make use of repeated opportunities to cooperate, including multiple meetings with senior IAEA officials that culminated in the Director General's visit in May to Tehran. It is clear that Iran still refuses to comply with the common set of established international rules, norms, and principles that accompany a state's right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Regarding the latest IAEA-Iran meetings in May, we regret that Iran was unable to agree to and implement the IAEA's proposed structured approach for resolving the Agency's concerns about Iran's nuclear program, as called for in the resolution adopted by the Board last November. We are also deeply concerned that Iran continues its refusal to provide the Agency access to the Parchin facility -- a request that the Director General reiterated in his May 2 letter to Iran. We are deeply troubled by the Director General's report in this regard, and by the related presentation made by Deputy Director General Nackaerts at the May 30 Technical Briefing showing that Iran is undertaking likely sanitization activities at the Parchin facility that would prevent the Agency from carrying out its mandate to establish whether Iran's declarations are correct and complete. As noted in the Director General's report, virtually no activity had been observed for a number of years at the specific location within the Parchin site to which the IAEA has requested access. However, following the Agency's request for access, the Director General reported that "the buildings of interest to the Agency are now subject to extensive activities that could hamper the Agency's ability to undertake effective verification." If Iran has nothing to hide, why deny the Agency access and carry out these apparent cleanup efforts?

We note the Director General's report that, during his meeting with Dr. Jalili in Tehran, the two parties decided to agree on a structured approach to address the Agency's longstanding concerns with the possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear program. We further note Dr. Jalili's promise that the remaining issues posed during the talks in Vienna and Tehran are not obstacles to reaching an agreement. However, we regret that despite this assurance made last month, Iran has still not yet executed an agreement with the Agency detailing this structured approach. We urge Iran to move in an expedited manner to reach an agreement with the Agency at its pending meeting with the Agency on Friday, June 8, and, much more importantly, to implement such an agreement without

further delay by granting the access to all sites, equipment, persons and documents requested by the Agency, including Parchin, and to halt any sanitization efforts pending that visit. The international community will judge Iran not on its words, but by the actions it takes to address these longstanding concerns.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would also like to recall the statement made by EU High Representative Ashton at the close of the E3+3 meetings with Iran in Baghdad May 23-24. We would like to emphasize that this is the beginning of a process to hold Iran accountable to its international obligations and to resolve the outstanding issues that raise questions about the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program. The E3+3 process does not, and cannot, replace the serious discussions between the IAEA and Iran on implementing a structured approach to resolve the Agency's concerns with the possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear program, as well as separate Agency efforts to ensure that all issues associated with verifying the correctness and completeness of Iran's declarations are addressed.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to reiterate that while we are encouraged by the ongoing discussions between Iran and the Agency and hopeful that a modalities agreement can be quickly reached, success will only be measured and defined by Iran's actual fulfillment of the agreement. It is not enough to merely sign a document. Iran must take the steps necessary to resolve the longstanding issues with its nuclear program without any further delay.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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#### **4. U.S., India Maintain Good Military-to-Military Relations (06-05-2012)**

By Jim Garamone  
American Forces Press Service

DELHI, India, June 5, 2012 – Military-to-military relations between the United States and India have gotten so good there is literally nothing leaders cannot talk about, including an increased Indian role in Afghanistan, U.S. defense officials said here today.

Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta will meet with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Shiv Shankar Menon, India's national security advisor, today, and Indian Defense Minister A.K. Anthony tomorrow. Panetta will also deliver a speech at the Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis today.

Officials speaking on background said Panetta would emphasize three themes during his visit. The first -- rebalancing U.S. military power to the Asia-Pacific -- continues a message his trip to Singapore, Vietnam and now India is designed to highlight.

India was the only country mentioned by name in the new strategic guidance first promulgated in January. Panetta's meetings with Indian leaders and his speech are designed to provide options and encourage discussion, a senior defense official said. The speech specifically will point to how critical India is to promoting peace and stability in the region.

The United States and India share many of the same values and those values are represented by key principles, officials said. These principles are the rule of law, adherence to international norms and



standards, freedom of navigation, the right for countries to pursue their economic interests unfettered and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

“It’s only natural as India plays a more active role in the broader Asia-Pacific region, that we would partner with India,” the senior defense official said.

The second theme of the engagement lies in India’s critical location as the crossroads between East and West Asia. “Not only do we value India’s partnership in promoting stability and prosperity in East Asia, but also the peace and stability in Afghanistan and South Asia more generally,” the official said.

In the past decade, India has not played a large role in Afghanistan, but it has steadily increased economic investments in the country. The official said the United States welcomes India playing a more active political and economic role in Afghanistan. “We welcome India’s contributions to training the Afghan national army and Afghan national police,” he said.

The official said there is always the chance that the historic distrust between India and Pakistan could spill over if India helps Afghan national security forces, but “this is not predestined, this does not have to be the case,” he said. “India and Pakistan share an interest -- the same interest we have - of peace and stability in Afghanistan.”

All nations of the region and international allies of Afghanistan need to work together to “harmonize” approaches to Afghanistan, the senior defense official said.

The third theme Panetta will stress is the bilateral defense relationship between India and the United States. Over the past 10 years the defense relationship between India and the United States has steadily improved. U.S. and Indian service members now regularly exercise together and there is a robust exchange program between the two militaries. And U.S.-India military exercises have increased in scope and complexity over the years.

In 2011, the U.S. military conducted more than 50 significant military activities with India, and Panetta would like to see these exercises become larger and more challenging to both militaries.

India is a valued customer as well. In the past 11 years, India has bought around \$8.5 billion worth of defense equipment from the United States. “India has a large military and each of its services is modernizing,” the official said.

The bottom line of Panetta’s visit to India is that it allows him to consult with Indian officials on a full-range of subjects. “There is nothing that we can’t discuss with India,” the official said. “We look forward to harmonizing our approaches with India and other countries in the region.”

Biographies:

[Leon E. Panetta](#)

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## **5. Panetta Describes U.S. Shift in Asia-Pacific (06-04-2012)**

By Jim Garamone  
American Forces Press Service

Singapore — The United States is a Pacific power and will remain engaged in the region, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said during a speech delivered at the 11th Annual Shangri-La Dialogue here.

Panetta explained what America's enduring shift toward the Asia-Pacific means to the region. The speech took place June 2 here. Singapore time is 12 hours ahead of the U.S. East Coast.

The shift has long been forecast. After the fall of the Soviet Union, there were those in the U.S. government who urged a re-focusing of U.S. strategy toward the Pacific. China and India are two of the fastest-growing economies on Earth and the nations of Southeast Asia also grew behind the shield of U.S. presence in the region.

The United States also has deep, lasting alliances with nations in the region including Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Australia and New Zealand.

This progress and shift, however, were interrupted by the attacks of 9-11 and American attention shifted to combating the terrorist menace.

But now the war in Iraq is over and U.S. troop levels are drawing down in Afghanistan. Last year, President Obama approved a strategy shifting toward Asia. The United States has thousands of miles of Pacific coastline and is an integral part of the region.

"We take on this role not as a distant power, but as part of the Pacific family of nations," Panetta said at the conference. "Our goal is to work closely with all the nations of this region to confront common challenges and promote peace, prosperity and security."

Defense policy in the region calls for the U.S. military to expand military-to-military relationships well beyond the traditional treaty allies.

China is, of course, the major player in the region. China has grown to the second-largest economy in the world and is investing in modernizing its military. Panetta wants good relations with China and will travel there later this year to expand those contacts.

The secretary stressed that the U.S. shift toward the region in no way is aimed at China. "Our effort to renew and intensify our involvement in Asia is fully compatible with the development and growth of China," Panetta said. "Indeed, increased U.S. involvement in this region will benefit China as it advances our shared security and prosperity."

The United States is working with many nations in the region to promote regional security. There are threats in the area. Terrorism, piracy, narco-trafficking, human trafficking are just a few of the problems. There are disputes over territory and the United States would like to see all these problems addressed peacefully by all nations.

Panetta praised the Association of Southeast Asian Nations for its "rules-based" regional security architecture. The secretary also said he looks forward to working with defense ministers from around the region.



Discussions and dialogue can help calm the waters in the South China Sea, where several countries in the region have claims. “The U.S. position is clear and consistent. We call for restraint and diplomatic resolution; we oppose provocation, coercion or the use of force,” Panetta said. The United States does not take sides on the disputes, the secretary said, and America has made this position clear to all in the region.

The U.S. military will shift its stance as the global situation shifts, the secretary said. Marine ground and aviation units have begun rotational deployments to Australia. The United States and the Philippines are looking at a similar arrangement.

American littoral combat ships will be berthing in Singapore and the number of Navy assets deployed will shift, too. “By 2020, the Navy will reposture its forces from today’s roughly 50/50 split between the Atlantic and Pacific to about a 60/40 split between those oceans — including six aircraft carriers, a majority of our cruisers, destroyers, littoral combat ships and submarines,” Panetta said.

The United States will also shift resources to combat new threats of cyberwar and anti-access technologies.

The shift will continue, Panetta said, as leaders from both parties recognize the importance of the region.

“The United States has long been deeply involved in the Asia-Pacific,” Panetta said. “Through times of war and peace, under Democratic and Republican leaders, through rancor and comity in Washington, through surplus and debt. We were here then, we are here now and we will be here for the future.”

[Panetta on New U.S. Defense Strategy, Asia-Pacific Policy](#)

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## **6. Clinton Appeals to Assad Supporters to Abandon Syrian Regime (06-01-2012)**

By Phillip Kurata  
Staff Writer

Washington — The United States is appealing to pro-government business, religious and military figures in Syria to withdraw their support from the regime of President Bashar al-Assad to avoid civil war.

“As bad as the Assad regime is, it could get worse,” Clinton said in Copenhagen, Denmark, May 31. “We ... call upon the business leadership, the religious leadership, the military leadership ... to stand up now and call a halt to further support for this regime.” If the status quo continues, Syria will fall into a “sectarian civil war.”

Clinton said the United States is working with the international community to alleviate suffering while supporting the mission of former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan to negotiate a cease-fire as a first step to launching a political transition that would result in the emergence of a democratic government.

The secretary said Russia is “propping up” the Assad regime at a time that it should be working on a political transition.

At the United Nations in New York on May 31, U.S. representative Susan Rice criticized Russia for sending a ship laden with arms to the Syrian government. The ship is reported to have docked at the Syrian port Tartous during the past weekend.

“This is obviously of the utmost concern, given that the Syrian government continues to use deadly force against civilians,” Rice said. “It is not technically ... a violation of international law since there’s not an arms embargo, but it’s reprehensible that arms would continue to flow to a regime that is using such horrific and disproportionate force against its own people.”

Rice said the Syrian government is going to have to feel much greater pressure, particularly from its partners and supporters, to fulfill its commitments to the Annan plan “because, up to date, it hasn’t felt sufficient compulsion to do so.”

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## **7. U.S. Envoy Rice at U.N. on Sudan, Syria (05-31-2012)**

Remarks by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations, at a Security Council Stakeout, May 31, 2012

Ambassador Rice: Good afternoon. That was four and a half hours. Thank you for your patience. We had a lengthy and useful, quite comprehensive briefing on the situation along the border between Sudan and South Sudan from Under-Secretary-General Ladsous as well as Special Envoy Haile Menkerios. The report they provided was — I would characterize as mixed. There has been some progress, and, as I said in the Council, certainly we’re in a better place now — a month after the adoption of Resolution 2046 — than we were just prior to its adoption when the circumstances were indeed extremely dire. Today, we heard confirmation that the forces of South Sudan have completely pulled out of Abyei, that the forces of Khartoum — the SAF forces — are also now out of Abyei although there remain some police elements, which are supposed to move tomorrow, and some oil police, who are required to move but for which there is no announced intention to withdraw.

These are positive developments, and we welcome them. I think it’s important for the North to complete the withdrawal of all of its police elements, including the oil police, and that point was made by a number of colleagues in the Council. In addition, we welcome the fact that there — that the two parties have returned to the negotiating table as of early this week, and while many, many difficult issues remain and the progress in these talks is very nascent, the fact that they’re back at the table and continue to work through these issues is certainly better than the alternative.

On the other hand, we heard that there have been mutual allegations of military activity and skirmishes along the border. There have been allegations also of aerial bombardments. It’s been not possible for UN elements to confirm any of these reports definitively, but obviously, what is absolutely clear is that the two sides remain closely poised, in close proximity, and seemingly on a hair trigger. So this is still quite a dangerous — quite a precarious situation along the border, hence the importance of activating the Joint Border Verification Monitoring Mission, for the two sides to send their personnel to that mission, and for the two sides to quickly implement their obligations to demilitarize the border.

The last point I want to make — and obviously many, many other elements of Resolution 2046 and the obligations of the parties were discussed — but the United States emphasized, as did many other countries, our dire concern about the grave humanitarian in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile. And what we are seeing in terms of those who have been — those refugees who have made it across the border into Yida Refugee Camp, coming out of Southern Kordofan, is absolutely alarming. Those are the healthy ones, comparatively, that are able to make it out. And what we're seeing in terms of the most dire, acute malnutrition among children — the numbers are skyrocketing. And this is indeed an exceedingly worrisome situation. There has been no progress in terms of the government of Sudan allowing open humanitarian access, including into rebel areas. The tripartite proposal has not been adopted, and the rains are coming. So this is indeed something that many members of the Council are gravely concerned about.

I'll stop and take a couple of questions.

Reporter: Ambassador, thanks. If you don't mind, I'll start with two questions about Syria. The — it's come out that a Russian ship that was supposed to reach Syria on Saturday did in fact dock in Syria, the port of Tartous, which was apparently loaded with weapons. I'm just wondering if you could react to that. And then the other thing is — your comments yesterday here at the stakeout have created a bit of a buzz, and people are wondering if there is some sort of — if there is a kind of Plan B out there in which countries are thinking it might be necessary, as it has been in the past — in Kosovo, there was of course the case of Iraq, which is a different situation — where the United States and others went around the Security Council because of the deadlock. Perhaps you could expand —

Ambassador Rice: Well, let me say with respect to the reported docking of a ship carrying Russian arms, this is obviously of the utmost concern given that the Syrian government continues to use deadly force against civilians. It is not technically, obviously, a violation of international law since there's not an arms embargo, but it's reprehensible that arms would continue to flow to a regime that is using such horrific and disproportionate force against its own people.

With respect to what I said yesterday, the purpose of my comments and the thrust of them was that there are three potential outcomes, and the desired outcome — the best case outcome — is of course that the Syrian government fulfill its commitments and implement the Annan plan in toto (total) and that the opposition respond in kind. That is the thrust of the efforts that Kofi Annan has been making. We fully support them. We want to see them succeed. But if they are going to succeed, what is clear at this stage is that the government of Syria is going to have to feel much greater pressure, particularly from its partners and supporters, to fulfill its commitments because, up to date, it hasn't felt sufficient compulsion to do so.

Now, what I also said was, should that not materialize or fail, then it's the obligation of the Security Council to come together and apply that pressure in a collective way on the government of Syria. Again that, while not an optimal scenario like the first one, is one that would continue to maintain the unity of the Council, preserve, potentially, the viability of the Annan initiative, and we think it would be the second most preferable option. And our interest in this is to sober our collective thinking and concentrate the minds and make sure that we understand that we ought to all be doing our utmost to ensure that option one materializes, failing that, option two. But I was also stating what I think is a reality, that if neither of those scenarios come to pass, that the inevitable outcome of the status quo is that the situation continues to deteriorate, with grave risks for the region as well for the people of Syria. That's the scenario that none of us want to see and on which all members of the Council, I believe, are united. But if in fact we are all united and we don't want to see that

scenario, then we better do something to change the current dynamic because that's the direction in which we seem to be heading if the status quo persists.

Reporter: Madam Ambassador, as a quick follow up on Sudan, is there any — there've been a lot of stories about discussions possibly between the United States and Russia on trying some kind of a variation of the Yemen option in Syria, and I was wondering if you could comment on that. And as a follow up on Sudan, the talks between and Sudan and South Sudan did start this week. Did you get any update on whether they are making any progress at all?

Ambassador Rice: With respect to Syria, we are certainly in consistent and regular discussions with Russia and other countries about the situation in Syria. We in the Security Council — indeed the entire international community — has agreed by embracing the Annan plan that what we're looking for is a Syrian-led political transition that results in a democratic dispensation such that the people of Syria get to choose their own future. And we believe that that process would by definition lead to Asad's departure. Now, whether that is a Yemen-style or some other style, I think we are open about and prepared to discuss. The Yemen transition had certain merits. It certainly has yielded progress in that context, and we're open to learning what lessons can be gleaned from that or other transitions. The bottom line, though, is that this has to lead to the emergence of a new government that is representative of the will of the Syrian people.

Now, coming to Sudan, we did get a general sense that the discussions in Addis are continuing, that there seem to have been at least some positive process agreements. As always is the case, though, what is necessary is for those to be implemented with actions on the ground, and I think it would be premature for me to characterize their progress any more specifically or their outcome.

Reporter: Madam Ambassador, on al-Houla national inquiry — Syrian national inquiry. Yesterday Bashar al-Jafaari said that we will know in a day or two the identity of the people responsible for that massacre. Indeed, this morning — there was a conference an hour and a half ago, and they did not really name any culprits for these massacres. But they said they are not responsible, and they said all the people who were killed were peaceful people who refused to be against the government. They gave their reasoning, and they also said that all of them were killed from close quarter by guns or by knives, contrary to what Mr. Ladsous said that some of them were killed by shells. They denied that completely. Your reaction to this national Syrian inquiry results, which is preliminary, initial results? And also my second point is, yesterday, also Churkin — Ambassador Churkin — said that there must be accountability, there must be an investigation into the killing. Does he mean an international, transparent, independent, inquiry or does he mean the national Syrian —

Ambassador Rice: Talal, you know better than to ask me to speak for Ambassador Churkin.

Reporter: Can I put it this way? Are you going to move in the Security Council to establish such a mechanism to investigate and hold people accountable because since the Russians are agreeing to it, you are demanding it — are you going to move on it?

Ambassador Rice: Okay first of all, in response to your question about our reaction to the Syrian characterization of what transpired in Houla, I mean — I think quite simply it's another blatant lie. There is no factual evidence, including that provided by the UN observers, that would substantiate that rendition of events. And what has transpired has been clearly documented by the UN monitors on the ground. That's why they're there, and there's not any ambiguity about what was done with heavy weapons by whom and also the characterization of the shabiha militia being in all likelihood responsible for the door-to-door killing of innocents execution-style. So that's the answer to that question.

With respect to an inquiry, I mean, I think it's quite clear what happened. Having said that, there is a discussion underway in Geneva in the context of the Human Rights Council — discussion on a resolution on this subject that may come up as soon as tomorrow in which I think there will be an effort to try to ensure that facts are established to enable holding those individuals responsible accountable. But this is still something in progress.

Reporter: On Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan. There was a lot of back and forth in the Council when the resolution was passed whether the paragraph about these two regions are under Chapter VII. So, given what you've said, do you feel that Sudan is in any way not complying with or violating a Chapter VII mandate of the resolution, both to negotiate and/or to allow in access? And just one other thing I wanted to know. In Addis — it seems like a lot of the — some of the basis of the conflict is financial. So I wanted to know, is it your understanding that they're actually negotiating things like the oil transfer fee or IMF debt relief or what Sudan asked for — reparations for Heglig — or is it all security or is the financial aspect — and can the U.S. play any role in solving those financial issues?

Ambassador Rice: Well, to your first question, all of the operative paragraphs of resolution 2046 are under Chapter VII, and what we know—indeed what was reaffirmed today — is that there are various aspects of the obligations — the Chapter VII obligations under that resolution — that are unfulfilled by both sides, including the provisions related to Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile. So both sides have done some things, both sides have not done everything, and that remains something of great interest to and focus by the Council.

Reporter: Financial. Whether the U.S. can play a role in —

Ambassador Rice: Well first of all, I'm not able to give you a detailed characterization of the discussions in Addis. Others who are there, both for the U.S. and for the UN, can do that more precisely. But my understanding is that in this round thus far they have not gotten into the oil issues, the revenue-sharing issues. But they have in the past, as you know, and we have been very active, along with others, in trying to encourage a fair and viable resolution to the revenue-sharing issues, including helping the two parties draw on international expertise to try to work through these quite complex financial issues.

Reporter: Reducing debt at the IMF? Would the U.S. support reduction of Sudan's debt at the IMF?

Ambassador Rice: I'm not prepared to answer that at this stage. Thank you.

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